

2 MAR 1970

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Cite Government Repression of Students

Many Peace Corpsmen Leave Ethiopia

By Stanley Meisler

Los Angeles Times

ADDIS ABABA—The director of the Peace Corps in Ethiopia has resigned in protest against working in a repressive dictatorship "which cannot establish a social order with better answers to its problems than shooting and beating young people."

The resignation of Dr. Joseph Murphy, a former professor of political science at Brandeis University, reflected the disenchantment of a good number of Peace Corps volunteers and officials with the government of Emperor Haile Selassie and their sympathy for the many young, educated Ethiopians who want his regime to collapse.

Moreover, many volunteers, even those who shy away from taking a political stand, have found it unbearably difficult to teach in a school system where students continually boycott classes to defy the Emperor and continually abuse volunteers for representing a government that bolsters the Emperor.

Since last October, almost 70 of the 235 volunteer teachers in Ethiopia have resigned. Perhaps two-thirds have cited the Emperor's reactionary regime or the chaotic school situation as their reason. Some, of course, may have been looking for an excuse to get out of a job they never liked. The others resigned for medical or personal reasons.

Guard Storms Campus

The largest spate of resignations came after Dec. 29, when the Emperor's Imperial Bodyguard stormed the campus of Haile Selassie University in Addis Ababa and shot and bayoneted students who had gathered to protest the murder of their student union president. Although the government has announced that three students were killed in the melee, university sources say the total was closer to 20.

In any case, the bloodshed appeared to demoralize the Peace Corps and force volunteers and staff officials to agonize over their role in

the Ethiopian educational system.

Officially, the Peace Corps has bowed to the prevailing mood of its volunteers in Ethiopia. It has no plans to replace the volunteer teachers left in Ethiopia when their two-year tours end in 1971.

That means that the Peace Corps in Ethiopia, which was the largest Peace Corps program in Africa five years ago, with more than 600 volunteers, almost all teachers, will drop to a hundred volunteers next year, with no teachers.

There are a number of ironic turns to the troubles of the Peace Corps. Although many Peace Corps volunteers sympathize with the sentiments of young Ethiopians, the students have often made the Peace Corps a prime target of their fury.

Visible Symbol

To the students, the volunteers are simply the most visible symbol of American support of the Emperor. Many students believe the Emperor's regime would collapse without the economic and military assistance of the United States.

A good case can be made that the more than 1,500 Peace Corps volunteers who have taught in Ethiopia since 1962 have had a hand in stirring political ferment among the young.

The Ethiopian university service, an instigator of anti-Peace Corps feeling, is an indirect creation of the Peace Corps. It was created by Haile Selassie University at the suggestion of Harris Wofford, the first director of the Peace Corps in Ethiopia.

Under the program, university students spend a year in service to their country between their junior and senior years. At present, 460 Ethiopian university service students teach in high schools throughout the empire. Reflecting the anti-American and anti-Emperor sentiments at the university, these teachers have provoked a good deal of trouble for the Peace Corps in the last year.

Serious Incident

The most serious anti-Peace Corps incident erupted last Nov. 14 when two volunteers, Craig Johnson and Dick Obermanns were surrounded by 40 of their 11th graders near their school at Adowa in Northern Ethiopia. Then one student, who had been disciplined by Johnson earlier that day, shouted, "one, two three."

"The others behind us," Johnson wrote later, "pinned our arms and began to pummel us with stones, sticks and fists. After a minute or two, we were left bleeding in the dust with cuts and bruises all over our heads and upper bodies. Dick's left ear was half torn off, and both our glasses were broken and smashed."

The volunteers interpreted the attack as part of an effort by students and Ethiopian university service teachers to show their contempt for America and the Peace Corps.

Several other volunteers and Peace Corps officials, however, believe that the volunteers in Adowa overreacted to the beatings. In their view, the beatings may have been personal, rather than a manifestation of anti-American sentiment.

The beatings, however, persuaded four of the five volunteers in Adowa to resign from the Peace Corps and further depressed the spirits of volunteers elsewhere in the country.

Volunteers Panic

In December, panic seized the volunteers in the old, Moorish, walled city of Harar in northeastern Ethiopia.

Schooling had been in turmoil for some time there, with students continually boycotting classes since September.

"Teachers were often

shouted out of classes," volunteer Eleanor Shumway wrote in a report. "Peace Corps volunteer teachers got particular abuse about our cultural imperialism, involvement in Vietnam and the students certainly that we were CIA agents intent on making Ethiopia a second Vietnam."

Miss Shumway wrote that the harassment became worse in December. She said pupils insulted the volunteers, shouting, "Americans get out." Some volunteers were threatened with violence. Pupils threw rocks at them twice.

Ten of the 13 volunteers in Harar then resigned from the Peace Corps.

More Peace Corps resignations followed the Imperial Bodyguards' brutal and bloody suppression of the Ethiopian student demonstration at the university campus. This time, the resignations included that of the director, Dr. Murphy.

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